

Maleficent
By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.



Maleficent is a clever reworking of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale. The twist here is that the story is told completely from the perspective of the fairy. And what a fairy! In this case, it is Angelina Jolie whose unique beauty is perfect for this role. This is definitely not the tale you might be expecting. *Maleficent* offers a hybrid heroine to villainess to heroine transformation woven into the fabric of the familiar plot. It works on that level as it offers an alternate universe where things are not the same and yet, they are. The special effects in particular have borrowed from many other fantasy films that Disney must have raided their old props vaults for this one. The creatures are retreads too. On hand for some comic relief are three fluttering supporting fairies whose very appearance is smile producing but they have nothing on Tinker Bell. This movie belongs wholeheartedly to Jolie, who gives us a wounded creature who overcomes the internal and external scars in her life to become Magnificent as opposed to Maleficent.

Maleficent is a backstory for those of us with inquiring minds. Just like *Wicked* gave us a different perspective on the Wicked Witch, *Maleficent* lets us know how and why she became who she is. If there is one weak spot in this movie, it is Sharlto Copley who plays King Stephan. I just didn't think he was right in the part and no match for Jolie. If ever a casting opportunity was missed here, why didn't they get Brad Pitt for the role? Oh well, these are someone else's fantasy pieces after all. What I can tell you is that Elle Fanning was a sweet beauty and Sam Riley as an unwilling sidekick was very good. The psychology of wounded love, disappointment and disillusionment is very powerful in both destructive and constructive ways. We spread our wings innocently in the world trusting our hearts over our minds. In the end, hearts still rule.

Maleficent is more about trust, love, true love and redemption than it is about revenge. When we have been hurt by others, at first we might seek retribution and even seek to inflict pain on those who are innocent in the process, (children whose parents divorced badly can chime in here) but if we are true of heart, we eventually come to realize the mistakes we have made and try to correct them. That is the mark of a mature protagonist. What I appreciated most is that *Maleficent* showed how no one is all good or all evil and the value of being able to change according to life's impermanence. I liked it as a cautionary tale and as a fairy's tale.

Maleficent is worthy of four watchful fairy eyes. See for yourselves.

